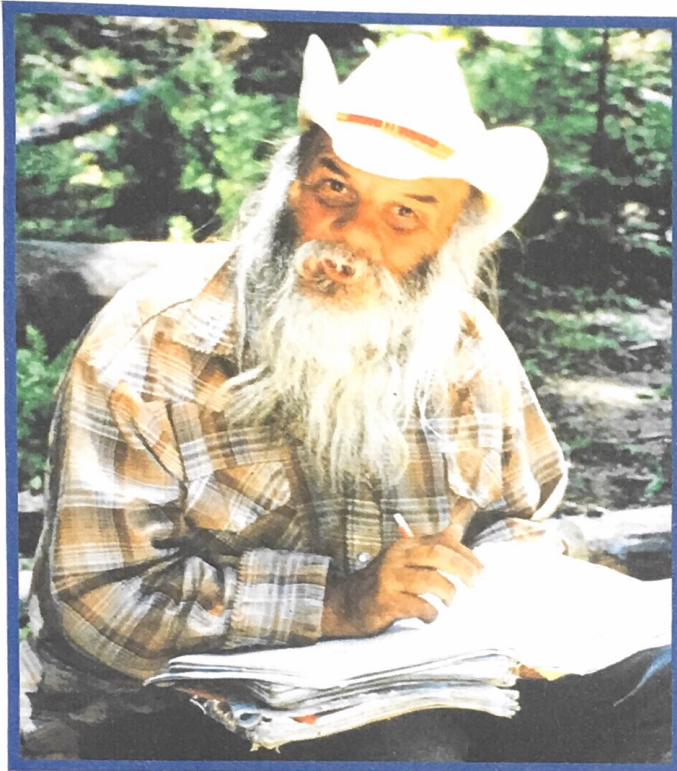




# Rainbow Family Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.  
Interviews with Rainbow  
Family of Living Light  
folks conducted between  
1977 and 2008.*

*Scanned in 2018.  
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09.A KENNY - "Freedom, That's the Word"

- The first of the Life Stories -  
- interviewed in November, 1972

5 pages

[09.A]



KENNY Freedom, That's The Word

[This account by Kenny is the first of the life story materials I was consciously taking down for this book. It was in November, 1972.]

We're street people and we know. Street people have a family tie. I think there should be a book about street people. We've had anthropologists study our culture before, and it's a culture to the max.

I'm from Virginia Beach, Virginia. I must have been 12 when I first smoked pot in 1967. Until then I was inhaling spot remover. I sniffed like a motherfucker and I hallucinated all kinds of things and my friend said, "This is only the beginning," and I smoked pot. Then when I was 15, in 1970, that was when everyone was starting to get loose and run away from home. I rebelled against my parents' trip - which was to suppress me into their trip.

Me and this chick and all these other people stole her father's truck. We hot-wired it. We got to J.G.'s grandfather's house in North Carolina, back in the boondocks. J.G. wanted to prove that he could drive the truck. He drove it into a ditch. The truck was totaled, the windshield was smashed. Here we was, six of us, running away from home. The cops did a what you call NCIC check on us and sent us back home - three dudes and three chicks. My old man put me in reform school - that was dirty. I was in for three weeks. It was OK. They had a pool table in there. Then after me and my girlfriend got out of reform school, we said, "Fuck this shit!"

We drew a map of Florida and left it under my bed. We were planning to go to Greenwich Village, but we thought if we left a map of the opposite direction, they'd go that way and leave us alone. But at the last moment we forgot and went to Florida. I forgot about the map. We figured we better go to Florida because it was winter, and it would be too cold in New York.

I didn't get busted in Florida, but my girlfriend did. We were



down there for three weeks together. Back then everybody used to hang around in parks in circles passing around wine and smoking joints. You remember back then - getting high on acid every night, but that's all over now. I was into drugs a lot back then. I didn't drink so much.

That's when I first met up with street people. They were still pretty hippy-dippy back then. I learned how to panhandle. Like you wait in a park while people are picnicking. Then, when they throw away their trash, you go over and get it.

Sometimes we didn't even wait. We'd go up to them and they'd give us some of their food. I learned to look through dumpsters behind supermarkets for food.

Me and a guy named Larry went up to Boston. He was a real good panhandler. That's where I met up with STP. Actually he liked them real good. I didn't at first. I was into keeping clean, sort of groomed, you know. I met up with Spooky and Nancy and Major. They could drink nine bottles of white port a day. Spooky came up and said, "Hey, do you want to be part of the Family, hangout with us?" I didn't hang out with them - not until I was 17. But it was like a family that was everywhere.

Spooky told me that Tucson was a good place to hang around in. I hitched to Tucson. I found that Humboldt Park was full of STP Family people and some folks called the LSD Family. That's where I first met up with Rufus, my road partner, and he taught me how to ride freights. We went to the freight yard and asked the switchman, "Hey, which one of them trains is headed for El Paso?" We took a freight to Deming, New Mexico. We hitched from Deming to Las Cruces. Then from there to Albuquerque - a freight. It was kind of funny. The boxcar was full of dirt - some kind of soot. Rufus rolled around in it trying to get as funky as possible. He laughed and said,



"Wait till Muskrat sees me."

That's when I first started getting funky. Until then I had been into keeping clean. I was just away from home. But these people, STP, were teaching me the ways of the road - panhandling, eating out of garbage cans. Back then it was a status symbol to be funky - like buying a new suit of clothes. I wasn't really into getting drunk till I was 17. That's when I started.

I went with the LSD Family from Albuquerque to a commune in the Sandia Mountains for a year. We grew a lot of our own pot. Also corn, tomatoes and all - just regular garden stuff. We had plenty of goats running around. Ever so often we'd go into Bernalillo and get food stamps. It was easy to get them - just say that we were trying to start a farm.

We didn't drink hardly at all on the commune. Like there were people that made their own homemade beer. One quart of that stuff will knock you on your ass. That stuff is heavy.

The commune got boring. You're out there way in the mountains. I wanted a little more action. We were doing a real good organic trip, total vegetarian, for about seven months. After a while we couldn't do this. We started looking at the goats and saying, "Wow, it's natural to eat meat." So we chopped off a goat's head and skinned it and cooked it. The LSD Family didn't last so long. I think I'm still STP.

I went to the first Rainbow Gathering in Colorado at Granby. It was great. All the ones after that really sucked. Like the one in Montana was hyped up and phony. It's just that whole cosmic trip - people coming up saying, "Oh, brother, this. Oh, brother, that," and it's so phony. We finally went out and got a gallon of wine. They stopped us on that little trail and told us we couldn't bring it in. Some of them stopped us and then others asked us for a drink. All the way up the path, these cosmic people were telling us, "Don't do this. Don't do that," and others were asking for a hit of wine. And one of us said, "Man, we hitched a thousand miles



here to climb up a mountain and chant O.M."

I met some really good people in the Rainbow Family that I really liked, but then you know, you meet the good and the bad. The Rainbow Family is too cosmic.

After that gathering me and my old lady were pulling burglaries, but we weren't into hurting people. We only robbed Dairy Queens and chain stores - stayed at Holiday Inns and bought grams of coke. We went into a park where people were pan handling and gave them \$130 so they could all go to a bar and drink. We would go in a restaurant and make dollar bills into paper airplanes and sail them around.

My old lady got tired of trucking around, so I went to wedding school and she's got a job as a waitress. We got two cars and a nice apartment. We're pretty much settled down. What I'd like to do is buy a pickup truck and go down to South America.

But it's getting too cold now winter's coming on to hang around the streets. It's good to have the apartment. Plus it's not healthy hanging around on the streets getting drunk all the time. And panhandling don't cut it.

But I like being a nomad - sort of a gypsy. Greek Mary in STP, she's a real gypsy. Her parents are from Greece. She's full gypsy and she's been on the road a lot longer than I have.

Street people used to be the in trip, but it ain't no more. People don't feel it from their heart no more. They don't feel the energy - the energy to do whatever they want. That may sound hippy-dippy, but it ain't. It ain't no hippy-dippy bullshit. Freedom - that's the word. Once you hit that open highway, you're out there and you're free - nothing between you and the cornfields. Sure you might get picked up by some Charlie Manson weirdo, but what's the chances of that?

I'm trying to get together enough to get an old car for \$75 and then I'll go around and hang out with all kinds



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of derelicts, because they're the real people. Now I've got my trip together and I'm a welder. But tomorrow I could be back on the road again, who knows?

I'm welding on a grain storage plant, but I could have gotten a job welding jet fighters. If we wanted to start a revolution, we could fuck up the plates on the jet. But the revolution's dead. All us young people are taking over anyway where the old folks left off, so why fuck it up? If they smash the state, I don't care. Just as long as I can make a living.

What it's about is we're infiltrating the system and we're changing it slowly. It's not right-out war with the government. As the younger people take the place of the older people, the younger people have their own ideas. It's a lot looser than it was then. I think students should just let it slide.

We've changed since them days. We don't talk about blowing up shit. Even now I think it might teach them a lesson, blowing something up, but now it's more cultural.

STP died a long time ago as far as I'm concerned. It died because too many people got into it.